

What is claimed is:

1. A versatile user interface system, comprising:
  - a consumer device including a central processing unit having a memory for processing communication data;
  - at least one application resident in the consumer device;
  - a user interface device having at least one key for interfacing with the consumer device; and

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  - a plurality of software and application programming interface (API) routines resident in the memory of the consumer device,
  - wherein at least one of the plurality of software and API routines forwards a key code to the at least one application, and
  - wherein the at least one application remaps a corresponding key code function of the at least one key or a sequence of keys when the at least one key on the user interface device is selected by a user.
2. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 1, wherein the plurality of software and API routines comprises a Versatile Remote Control Manager (VRCM).
3. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 1, wherein the consumer device comprises one of a set-top terminal, a satellite receiver, a television, and any other functionally similar device
4. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 3, wherein the set-top terminal is connected to a CATV communication system.
5. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 1, wherein the user interface device comprises one of a versatile remote control unit (VRC), a remote controller, a web-pad, a Personal Digital Assistant, and a hand-held device with a touch pad screen.

6. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 5, wherein the versatile remote control unit includes a display for displaying at least one soft key generated by the VRCM for programming of the application using the VRCM.

7. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 6, wherein the at least one soft key displays an application type to allow the VRCM to recognize that subsequent soft key selections correspond to the at least one application selected by the user.

8. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 6, wherein the VRCM causes the display to show the mapping for the corresponding key code function associated with the at least one application.

9. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 6, wherein the display displays a plurality of icons, one of the plurality of icons being associated with the at least one application.

10. A method for programming at least one application resident in a consumer device, comprising the steps of:

providing at least one application resident in a consumer device;  
providing a plurality of software and application programming interface (API) routines resident in the consumer device; and  
sending control signals to the consumer device using a user interface device,

whereby at least one of the plurality of software and API routines forwards a key code to the at least one application, and

whereby the at least one application remaps a corresponding key code function of the at least one key or a sequence of keys when the at least one key on the user interface device is selected by a user.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the plurality of software and API routines comprise a Versatile Remote Control Manager (VRCM).

12. The method according to Claim 11, further including the step of using the VRCM to download and display a graphical representation of the at least one soft key on a display device.

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13. The method according to Claim 12, further including the step of displaying an icon on the display device that enables the VRCM to recognize that subsequent soft key selections by the user correspond to the at least one application.

14. The method according to Claim 12, further including the step of displaying a mapping for each key, or sequence of keys, and the corresponding key code function associated with the at least one application.

15. The method according to Claim 12, wherein the display device displays a plurality of icons, one of the plurality of icons being associated with the at least one application.

16. The method according to Claim 11, wherein the VRCM interprets a key pressed by the user when no applications have registered with the VRCM.

17. The method according to Claim 10, further including the step of connecting the set-top terminal to a CATV communication system.

18. A versatile user interface system, comprising:  
a set-top terminal including a central processing unit for and memory for processing and storing communication data;  
at least one application resident in the memory of the set-top terminal;  
a versatile remote control unit having at least one key for sending control signals to the set-top terminal;

a Versatile Remote Control Manager (VRCM) resident in the memory of the set-top terminal,

wherein the VRCM forwards a key code to the at least one application, and

wherein the at least one application remaps a corresponding key code function for the at least one key or a sequence of keys when the at least one key is selected on the versatile remote control unit by a user.

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19. ~~The versatile user interface system according to Claim 18, wherein the versatile remote control unit includes a display for displaying at least one soft key generated by the VRCM.~~

20. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 18, wherein the at least one soft key displays an application type to allow the VRCM to recognize that subsequent soft key selections correspond to the at least one application selected by the user.

21. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 18, wherein the VRCM causes the display to show the mapping for the corresponding key code function associated with the at least one application.

22. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 18, wherein the versatile remote control unit displays a plurality of icons, one of the plurality of icons being associated with the at least one application.

23. The versatile user interface system according to Claim 17, wherein the set-top terminal is connected to a CATV communication system.

24. A cable television system, comprising:

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a set-top terminal including a central processing unit and memory for processing and storing communication data, the set-top terminal connected to a CATV communication system;

a display device operatively coupled to the set-top terminal;

at least one application resident memory of the set-top terminal;

a versatile remote control unit having at least one key for sending control signals to the set-top terminal to invoke the at least one application of the set-top terminal; and

a plurality of software and application programming interface (API) routines resident in memory of the set-top terminal,

wherein at least one of the plurality of software and API routines interact with the at least one application by forwarding a key code for the at least one application, and

wherein the at least one application remaps a corresponding key code function for the at least one key or a sequence of keys on the versatile remote control unit when the at least one key on the versatile remote control unit is selected by a user.

25. The cable television system according to Claim 24, wherein the plurality of software and API routines comprises a Versatile Remote Control Manager (VRCM).